United Nations S/PV.7998

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**7998**th meeting
Tuesday, 11 July 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *President:* | Mr. Wu Haitao | (China) |
| *Members:* | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Fernández Revollo |
| | Egypt | Mr. Moustafa |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Italy | Mr. Biagini |
| | Japan | Mr. Bessho |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Umarov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Iliichev |
| | Senegal | Mr. Ciss |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skoog |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Fesko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Hickey |
| | United States of America | Ms. Sison |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Rosselli |

**Agenda**

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2017/435)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2017/565)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-21001 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

**Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2017/435)**

**Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2017/565)**

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/435, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I also wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/565, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

**Mr. Lacroix** (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My statement will focus on three points. First, I will address the political situation, specifically with regard to the implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016, which is designed to govern the transition under way and lay the groundwork for elections. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General dated 30 June (S/2017/565), the implementation of that agreement by and large remains insufficient. Secondly, I will refer to the security situation in certain areas of the eastern and western parts of the country, which is characterized by an increase in clashes between armed groups and national security forces. In part, that situation is responsible for the disturbing increase in violations of human rights. It is also the reason for the deterioration in the humanitarian situation. Between May and June, the number of people displaced in Democratic Republic of the Congo increased by 26 per cent, totalling 1.3 million persons. In that context — and this will be my third point — the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is working to respond to the challenges facing the country and continuing its adjustment efforts, as I was able to observe during my visit to the country few weeks ago.

Six months ago, when President Kabila's second term was ending, the signing of the 31 December 2016 agreement by all the political stakeholders involved helped to avert a serious crisis. The agreement marked the culmination of many months of tension and negotiations and outlined the transition to elections at the end of 2017, which is currently under way. With less than six months to go before the elections, however, not all the transitional institutions are in place, and the consensus that characterized the progress being made a few months ago has gradually eroded.

The Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales acquises au changement, the platform uniting various opposition parties, has dissociated itself from recent developments. On 27 April it was not among the signatories to the special arrangement for implementing the agreement. On 16 May, its members were absent when Parliament inducted the transitional Government, and we fear that this erosion of the political consensus has also been detrimental to the establishment of the Conseil national de suivi de l'accord. The situation could make it even harder to maintain the spirit of collaboration and consensus approach that the political landscape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo needs. That is why Mr. Maman Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region, have been making every effort to exercise their good offices with a view to convincing all the relevant political actors of the importance of implementing the agreement as fully and quickly as

possible. It was with the aim of supporting their efforts that I visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo in mid-June. During my discussions I stressed the crucial importance of implementing the commitments made six months ago, and I had an opportunity to reiterate my appeal to President Kabila.

I would like to note, however, that despite the sense we have at times of an impasse, the progress being made on voter registration in 24 of the 26 provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a source of encouragement. By 10 July, under the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission and with MONUSCO's active support, at least 33 million voters, of an estimated total of nearly 41 million, had been registered. However, the security issues in the provinces of Kasai and Kasai Central have made registration there problematic. We should also be concerned about the Commission's delay in publishing the election calendar, as well as the continuing uncertainty surrounding the financing of the elections, despite the Government's efforts to disburse the agreed budget in the past few months. Finally, the Chair of the Commission's recent announcement about the impossibility of holding the elections by the end of the year is another reason for concern. At a time when the Democratic Republic of the Congo is midway through its transition, it is more essential than ever to ensure that the national political actors and international partners, including the members of the Security Council, mobilize once again to get the political agreement of 31 December 2016 back on track.

(*spoke in English*)

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to be a major worry. Instability persists in a number of areas in the east and west. In the east, a recent spate of attacks by armed groups against the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) has added a layer of complexity to an already volatile security landscape. In North Kivu province in particular, Mayi-Mayi groups, among others, recently conducted raids against FARDC positions, a new phenomenon that MONUSCO is assessing. In the meantime, clashes between ethnically based militias in North Kivu have continued. In South Kivu, armed groups have been increasingly involved in disputes related to customary succession and in intercommunal and transhumance-related disputes. In Ituri, the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) continues to pose the single greatest threat to civilians. Conflicts in neighbouring Burundi and South Sudan have been spilling over into the eastern provinces of Ituri and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In response, MONUSCO has continued to support the FARDC in operations against the FRPI in Ituri and the Lord's Resistance Army in Haut-Uélé. The Mission is also supporting local and community dialogue efforts in North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika, in an approach based on the belief that, while military means may sometimes be necessary, only a political solution can effectively address the root causes of the various conflicts that threaten civilians.

The violence in the Kasai provinces, in the western region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has reached disturbing levels. The Kamuina Nsapu militia has targeted and killed dozens of civilians, customary chiefs, public servants and security officers. It has also attacked voter registration centres, schools and religious institutions. For example, in a series of clashes with the FARDC in Kazumba territory between 25 and 28 April, 41 militia members and 12 soldiers were killed. The recent increase of inter-ethnic violence in the Kasai region is just as worrying. In April, for example, violence between Pende and Tshokwe communities reportedly aligned with the Government, and Luba and Lulua communities reportedly associated with the Kamuina Nsapu militia, led to the deaths of 38 people in Kamonia territory in Kasai province. MONUSCO has also received reports of summary executions and rapes, including of civilians by the security forces.

In response to the developments in the Kasai provinces, MONUSCO has established a small and mobile presence in various locations in order to help protect civilians. It has deployed personnel in Bulungu, Luiza and Tshimbulu, in Kasai Central province, and reinforced its existing presence in Kananga and Mbuji-Mayi. Through a combination of human rights monitoring and political outreach, supported by a light but increasing military presence, the Mission is helping to bring back some measure of stability wherever it can. In Tshimbulu, for example, the deployment in May of a standing combat deployment has helped to enable internally displaced people to return. Schools and churches have reopened and the Mission is supporting the local authorities in their mediation work. Despite those efforts, there continue to be disturbing reports of human rights violations and abuses on an almost daily basis. Dozens of mass graves have been reported. So

far, national investigation efforts have been slow. The Mbuji-Mayi military court's recent conviction of seven FARDC officers involved in the killing of civilians in Mwanza Lomba is a small but encouraging step in the right direction. I welcome the Human Rights Council's recent resolution requesting that international investigators be appointed to assist the authorities in that regard.

Throughout my recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I stressed the importance of prioritizing political means in addressing the situation in the Kasai provinces and emphasized the urgency of ensuring accountability for the crimes committed, including crimes by members of the security forces. I also underscored the determination of the United Nations to ensure that those responsible for the killing of our colleagues Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán are brought to justice. I was encouraged by the assurances that President Kabila gave me regarding his determination to ensure that the crimes committed in the Kasais do not go unpunished. Such statements of intention must, however, be followed by concrete action. The level of cooperation and support that the Government provides to the team of international investigators appointed by the Human Rights Council will be a test of its commitment to accountability.

MONUSCO continues to adjust its posture in response to a rapidly changing environment and to focus on supporting the implementation of the 31 December agreement in order to pave the way for holding elections and to protect civilians. I count on the Council's continued support to our ongoing efforts to transform the Mission into a more agile, flexible and responsive tool. I am committed to ensuring that MONUSCO delivers on its core mandated objectives as efficiently and effectively as possible and that it continues to evolve in response to the changing situation on the ground. In the current financial context, it will be critical to ensure that the Mission makes the best possible use of the resources at its disposal by focusing on a limited set of key priorities. The strategic review of the Mission is under way and, as requested, we will be presenting the Council with options by 30 September.

The current political impasse, the rising insecurity, and the worsening human rights and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo require a concerted response from regional and international partners. That response must aim to help to create the conditions for a successful transition and the holding of free, fair and inclusive elections, in accordance with the Constitution. The Secretariat and MONUSCO are determined to work with the Congolese Government and people to achieve that goal. Together, we must preserve the hard-won gains of the past 17 years and pave the way for the Mission's exit.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his very enlightening briefing and for the tireless commitment of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to the Congolese people.

This meeting is being held at a critical moment, six months after the signing of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 and three months after the adoption of an innovative mandate for MONUSCO. It allows us to review developments in the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to reaffirm our shared priorities. I should like to lay out France's assessment of three aspects: the growing political backlog; the worrisome deterioration of the security situation and human rights, in particular in the Kasais; and the welcome responsiveness of MONUSCO in implementing the mandate set forth in resolution 2348 (2017).

First, as to the growing delays in the implementation of the 31 December agreement is of concern to France as the deadline for holding elections approaches. The agreement is the only credible road map for the end of the crisis. That is why the lack of consensus and the systematic blockages in its implementation are very worrying. Elections must take place in less than six months, time is running out. It is therefore urgent that the Government take the steps necessary to reaffirm its commitment to respecting the provisions of the agreement. The organization of elections, the effective establishment of the National Council for Oversight of the Agreement and the implementation of confidence-building measures are priorities.

We welcome the progress made on voter registration. That is a positive step forward and a dynamic that needs to be pursued. We regret, however, the delays in the

registration process, in particular in the three provinces of Kasai and Kinshasa. We call on the authorities to take the measures necessary to finalize the registration and the voter register. I wish to stress that compliance with the deadlines set out in the agreement is essential. France calls on the Congolese authorities to take all the measures necessary to organize the elections as soon as possible and recalls the need for an urgent publication of an electoral timetable in accordance with the provisions of the 31 December agreement. These advances are all the more urgent as the current impass is already leading to an increase in areas of instability in the country.

Secondly, the unprecedented intensification of violence in the west is particularly alarming and requires our full attention. Violence in the Kasais has reached an unsustainable level. The clashes between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and Kamwina Nsapu militia are taking a heavy toll on the populations, as evidenced by the continued increase in the number of displaced persons and refugees.

We are also very concerned about the rapid spread of insecurity to Tanganyika and the increasing intercommunity conflicts in these regions. In that regard, I join the Secretary-General in condemning the attacks in the strongest possible terms and in calling on the belligerents to lay down their arms in order to put an end to this climate of insecurity and its disastrous humanitarian consequences. The escape of detainees, which is increasing in unusual proportions, also adds to growing insecurity.

A key aspect of the resolution of this crisis will be the response of the Congolese authorities to the fight against impunity. We call on the Congolese authorities to deploy the means necessary to investigate these violations thoroughly, identify those responsible and take appropriate measures to ensure that they are held accountable, irrespective of their affiliation. We welcome the adoption by the Human Rights Council on 23 June — by consensus and with the agreement of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — of the resolution authorizing the dispatch of a mission of international experts, in cooperation with the Congolese authorities. We call on the Congolese authorities to cooperate fully with that team of international experts.

Thirdly, we commend the significant efforts made by MONUSCO to adapt to the mandate provided for in resolution 2348 (2017). MONUSCO responded quickly to the adjustments provided for in that resolution. It must focus on its two priorities: the protection of civilians and support for the implementation of the 31 December agreement. We welcome the rapid translation of this reconfiguration of the Mission on the ground, and encourage it to pursue its efforts in that direction.

In conclusion, France reiterates once again the importance of the consensual implementation of all the provisions of the 31 December agreement, which is the framework agreed by all the Congolese parties for the transition towards the holding of elections. Failure to comply with one or more of its provisions would entail significant risks for the stability of the entire region, including a deterioration of security, outbreaks of violence, political destabilization and repercussions for the human rights situation and humanitarian and socioeconomic conditions. This scenario is, unfortunately, unfolding before our eyes now, as evidenced by the upsurge of violence in the Kasais, in Tanganyika and in the east of the country. France therefore solemnly calls on all political actors to redouble their efforts to meet the commitments made last December and to organize the elections. There is an urgent need to do so.

**Mr. Rycroft** (United Kingdom): I would not normally take of the floor ahead of consultations, but as both Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and the Ambassador of France have expressed so clearly, these simply are not normal times for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, for many people in the Kasai region, these are the darkest moments of their lives. The reports emanating from that region should send a shiver down each and every spine in the Chamber. They are reports that bear all the hallmarks of the very worst of humankind: mass killings, beheadings, mass graves, millions displaced.

Sadly, as highlighted by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, the Government's own security forces are responsible for much of this death and destruction in certain areas of the Kasai provinces. Nearly 100 children have been maimed and killed by their own Government's forces, and children have been sexually abused by Government forces. This represents a wider, worrying trend. The Secretary-General reports that 60 per cent of 1,444 human rights violations and abuses recorded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the past three months have been committed by the forces of the Government — the same Government that bears the primary responsibility to protect its citizens. When

faced with hell, people should be able to look to their Government in hope. For the people of the Kasai, they do so only in fear.

This does not mean that the militia operating in these areas are innocent — not by any stretch of the imagination. As we heard from Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, they too are responsible for rape, killing and high levels of child recruitment.

It is clear that the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo compels us all to take a stand. That is why we welcome the international investigation mandated by the Human Rights Council last month. It must act as soon as possible and be conducted to international standards of independence and transparency. We urge the Government to cooperate fully with the investigation. Those responsible for these horrific crimes must be held to account.

Sadly, the situation in the Kasai is by no means an isolated example in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is also renewed violence in the east of the country, much of which has a worrying ethnic dimension. Such violence in different areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo only further reinforces our belief that political uncertainty and instability in Kinshasa are fuelling violent uncertainty and violent instability across the country, and this is now presenting a serious threat to regional stability.

We all know what needs to happen, and the Ambassador of France set that out very clearly. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo knows what it needs to do — stop the violence, ensure accountability for the violations and abuses and implement the 31 December agreement in full. As set out in the agreement, elections should be held in six months. We simply must see progress that gives the Congolese people and the world the confidence that this will be realized. That is the issue that is fundamentally increasing frustration and tensions in the country.

To deliver on this, the Independent National Electoral Commission must release an electoral timetable setting a date for elections, in line with the 31 December agreement, and agree a budget so that vital international funds can be released. Let me take this opportunity to welcome the progress in electoral registration and the positive role played by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in support of that. But this progress must continue; insecurity cannot be used as an excuse for further delay.

In truth, none of this new. We have known what needs to happen for some time. It is clear that our message is simply not getting through to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The killings have continued; the horror has continued. What has failed to continue is genuine implementation of the 31 December agreement, which laid the path towards elections. It is therefore incumbent upon all of us in the Council to do more. With the eyes of the world looking on us today in an open meeting, I ask all Council members to support a clear, unequivocal message: stop the violence, hold those responsible for violations and abuses to account and implement the 31 December agreement in full and without delay.

**Mr. Rosselli** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): You will no doubt notice, Mr. President, that I am very pleased today to not be speaking alone in an open meeting of the Security Council, as is usually the case. As a result, as I said, we are quite pleased to be in such good company this morning vis-à-vis our membership.

I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for presenting the Secretary-General's reports (S/2017/435 and S/2017/565). I would also like to reiterate our gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Maman Sidikou, and to the entire team and staff of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for the work they have been carrying out in more than complex conditions. We reiterate once again Uruguay's commitment to stability and peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, not only in our capacity as a non-permanent member of the Security Council but also as a country that has contributed troops in Congo over the past 16 years without interruption.

We are at a critical point for the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As already mentioned, six months ago the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement was signed thanks to the significant mediation efforts by the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo, which generated expectations for a peaceful solution to the crisis. In six months, and before the end of the year and in accordance with the agreement, elections are supposed to be held, leading to a peaceful transfer of power. At this point, halfway

through the year, there is serious concern about the slow and limited progress in the implementation of the political agreement, as well as about the deepening of certain adverse trends in the situation of the country.

Uruguay reiterates its support for the political agreement, which we believe is the only viable solution to the crisis, and urges all the political actors to fully implement the agreement. It is crucial for the parties to step up their efforts in implementing the transition arrangements, in setting up the national council to follow up the implementation of the agreement and in instituting confidence-building measures. All of these elements are provided for in the agreement.

The report of the Secretary-General contained in document S/2017/565 and Mr Lacroix's briefing give an account of an ongoing worsening of several negative trends with respect to the situation of the country, mainly in the areas of security and human rights. We are concerned about the spread of insecurity in the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There has been an increase in violence among ethnic communities, particularly in the Kasai region. Instability persists in many sectors in the eastern part of the country, due in large part to the activities of armed groups and militias. The risk of violence in the main urban areas has grown in the light of the looming electoral context. This new outlook poses serious threats to a growing number of civilians, many of whom have been forced to relocate within the country or in neighbouring countries.

Uruguay expresses its deep concern over the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are struck by the significant increase in the number of violations that have been documented by MONUSCO month after month, affecting above all vulnerable populations, such as children and women. But we are even more struck by the fact that State actors have been responsible for more than half of documented human rights violations.

We are also concerned by the trend towards maintaining restrictions on the democratic space, with an increase in violations of civil and political rights, in particular the freedoms of peaceful assembly, opinion, expression and thought. Uruguay reiterates that it is the responsibility of the Government to respect and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. We urge the national authorities to act swiftly to commence investigations and prosecutions in order to bring to justice those responsible for violations of human rights as well as to fight impunity.

In conclusion, Uruguay acknowledges MONUSCO's efforts to readjust its priorities and its mandate with a view to transforming the force to increase its efficiency and effectiveness. However, I would reiterate on this occasion what we said during the mandate-renewal debate last March with respect to reducing the number of MONUSCO troops. At a time when there is a obvious increase in violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are even more concerned about comments on possible new reductions in the coming months. As for the strategic review of MONUSCO that the Secretariat will carry out in the next few weeks in order to adapt the Mission's mandate to the new requirements, we fully confirm that the recommendations arising therefrom will be based on a frank assessment of the current situation on the ground, which, in our opinion, is not at all encouraging.

**Mr. Umarov** (Kazakhstan): Let me thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for the presentation of a very insightful report of the Secretary-General on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2017/565).

Since our previous meeting in March (see S/PV.7903), the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained fragile and dangerous. The political agreement of 31 December 2016 has yet to be implemented. It is a matter of concern that the new Government, which was sworn in before the National Assembly on 16 May, was not recognized by the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement. We reiterate our call to all stakeholders in the country to implement the 31 December agreement through peaceful dialogue.

The implementation of the agreement must be supported and reinforced by regional States and organizations through the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. Under these circumstances, the swift organization of the presidential elections by the end of 2017 is critically important in order to avoid turning the intensified political tensions into a full-fledged conflict. We welcome the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the assistance of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic

of the Congo (MONUSCO), in completing the voter registration process in the near future.

Kazakhstan commends the activities of MONUSCO to support the implementation of the 31 December agreement and the electoral process. We strongly condemn the activities of all armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and their violations, especially those involving attacks on the civilian population, United Nations personnel and humanitarian actors; summary executions; sexual and gender-based violence; and large-scale recruitment and the use of children against international law. All armed groups must drop their weapons and cease immediately all forms of violence. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should maintain a high level of cooperation with MONUSCO and conduct joint operations to neutralize those armed groups. This is also important in order to register all voters and prepare for the elections of the troubled Kasai and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo regions.

As we heard from Ms. Gamba de Potgieter last Thursday, the scale of human rights violations against children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in the Kasai region, has been the greatest it has ever been for the past few years. Therefore, I would like to reiterate that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo bears a primary responsibility for the protection of the entire civilian population, first and foremost women and children. With regard to the killing of two United Nations experts, Kazakhstan believes that comprehensive, credible and transparent criminal investigations by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must continue in order to bring all perpetrators to justice.

The humanitarian situation in the country, exacerbated by the ongoing violence in the Kasai region and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, has continued to deteriorate since the beginning of 2017. The downward macroeconomic trend and poor socioeconomic situation are aggravating the humanitarian situation as well. The United Nations system, international financial institutions and the African Development Bank must strengthen the peace-development nexus to support the humanitarian and political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Mr. Skoog** (Sweden): I thank Under Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/565).

Like others, we are deeply concerned about the scale of violence, violations of international humanitarian law and the grave human rights violations and abuses taking place with widespread impunity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo right now. The situation in the Kasai, as well as the negative development in the eastern part of the country, are particularly worrying. Children are disproportionally affected, as we have heard. We must act with determination to ensure that these violations come to an end and prevent further conflicts from erupting or spreading. Political means must be given priority.

The implementation of the 31 December agreement, paving the way for free, peaceful and credible elections, is key in that regard. We again call upon all signatories to fully implement the agreement, which, together with a sustainable settlement of outstanding issues in the political process, provides the only viable way out of the current humanitarian, economic and security crisis.

We again welcome the important work conducted by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mamam Sidikou in his good offices function, and we support his call on the Independent National Electoral Commission to publish without delay an official and consensual calendar for the organization of the elections.

A peaceful and stable Democratic Republic of the Congo is critical for stability in the subregion and the region as a whole. We encourage constructive, concerted and continuous engagement by regional actors. In that context, we welcome the joint delegation of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern Africa Development Community, the African Union and the United Nations in Kinshasa in May and hope for a speedy follow-up.

The mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which we adopted this spring, with its focus on support for the political process, compels the United Nations to act strategically and efficiently. We stand ready for continuous and close consultations with the Secretariat to ensure the Mission's ability to fulfil the mandated tasks, not least related to the protection of civilians. The strategic review will provide important input to such discussions.

We welcome and fully support the Human Rights Council resolution co-sponsored by us requesting the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to dispatch a team of international experts, including from the region, to investigate allegations of gross violations and abuses in the Kasai region. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to cooperate fully with the investigation team and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in this regard.

Lastly, no stone should be left unturned in our efforts to deliver justice for those who lost their lives in the service of the United Nations, including the two United Nations experts — Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp. Sweden, in cooperation with the Secretary-General and partners concerned, will continue to look into concrete proposals on how the United Nations system, including the Council, can further support the ongoing national investigations in order to establish the truth and bring the perpetrators to justice. One such option would be an additional investigative mechanism.

**Mr. Fernández Revollo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing. The information he provided is very useful in order to understand the importance of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Bolivia expresses its concern about the grave violence spread by armed groups, which affects civilians, increases the number of internally displaced persons, incites intercommunal clashes and increases insecurity, all of which the Congolese people are victims of, in particular the most vulnerable — women and children.

Similarly, we are concerned about the worsening of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/565) points out that 1,444 human rights violations were committed between March and May. According to data by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the Kasai region, one of the regions most affected by violence, more than 500 boys and girls were recruited by armed groups. There have been 600 cases of sexual violence reported since August 2016, and there have been many cases of human trafficking, summary executions and arbitrary arrests. Bolivia condemns any act of sexual exploitation and abuse, which must be duly investigated and brought to justice in the competent Courts so that this type of violence does not go unpunished.

There are now 1.4 million internally displaced persons in the Kasai region, and a total of 3.8 million internally displaced persons throughout the entire country. Moreover, more than 400,000 children under the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition in Ituri province, and it is estimated that 3.5 million children are affected throughout the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In half of the 26 provinces that are affected by armed violence, civilians have suffered not only the loss of lives, but they also lack access to health and other service, as hospitals and medical centres have been targets of attacks by armed groups, which has led to a serious humanitarian crisis.

We call for the stepping up the efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and its staff in order to bring security to civilians and to neutralize the armed groups in the country, including increasing the community alert networks and improvements in early warning mechanisms. MONUSCO is called upon to play a more active role in that respect.

Concerning the political agreement signed on 31 December 2016 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo between the Government and the opposition, Bolivia believes that it is a solid basis that establishes a road map for organizing the presidential elections, in accordance with the Congolese Constitution and resolution 2277 (2016).

With regard to the December 2016 agreement, we are concerned that the monitoring mechanism has not yet been set up and regret the lack of progress in the implementation of the agreed confidence-building measures. We call on all parties to step up those endeavours. We highlight the efforts towards updating the voter registry in 13 provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and we encourage authorities to continue that process in the Kasai and Kasai Central provinces with a view to implementing the 31 December 2016 agreement. We also stress the need for an inclusive dialogue on compliance with the Congolese Constitution that considers the viewpoints of all parties, including the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement and the ruling majority.

We commend the active support of regional organizations, the participation of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and each of the guarantors of the peace process which enhance their efforts through political appeasement and cooperation initiatives for sustainable reconciliation. We take note of the diplomatic efforts of the Government that seek to broaden other regional countries' support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for the implementation of the December 2016 agreement — including bilateral presidential level meetings.

We call on all armed groups to lay down their arms and on all parties to the conflict to set aside any interests that might block fruitful dialogue that would enable the consolidation of agreements that would bring stability to the country. We encourage the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and MONUSCO to coordinate their efforts.

Finally, we are convinced that the people and the institutions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be the ones that make decisions regarding the future of their country. We believe that principle to be a decisive factor in the promotion of peace, stability and development that fully respects the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Ms. Sison** (United States of America): When we consider the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we far too often have witnessed scenes of unspeakable violence and human cruelty. The United Nations and the wider international community have worked tirelessly for years to help bring peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We commend the efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to protect civilians and support implementation of the 31 December agreement. The MONUSCO peacekeeping mission has the very challenging task of helping keep people safe, and we remain committed to ensuring that it is able to effectively fulfil its mandate.

But an essential step to ensuring that history does not once again repeat itself in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is to help the Congolese people complete a transition of power and make their voices heard through a credible, peaceful and inclusive presidential election this year. Election delays cannot continue. The international community must step up and apply more pressure, not only on President Kabila and his Government but also on the Independent National Electoral Commission. The Commission must immediately publish an electoral calendar, and specifically the date for the presidential election.

The United States has already demonstrated that it will take action against those who delay and obstruct the implementation of the 31 December agreement and preparations for credible, peaceful and inclusive presidential elections. We are ready to take additional action to sanction those who stand in the way of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's first democratic transition of power. The Security Council should also consider targeted sanctions to reduce the violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and help pressure all stakeholders to play a more constructive role in moving the country forward. Those responsible for undermining the peace and security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and democratic institutions must be held accountable. Thus far, stakeholders have felt few consequences for perpetuating instability.

The alternative to supporting a democratic transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a return to violence, which is what we are seeing today in the Kasai regions. This return to horrific violence is an outcome that no one on the Council should want to see, but in the past few months approximately 1.3 million Congolese have been displaced, having fled violence in the Kasais, including nearly 30,000 who are now refugees in neighbouring Angola.

Just five days ago, the Council heard the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, relay the sickening reports coming out of the Kasai regions. We were told that the conflict is "spreading and intensifying", and that hundreds, if not thousands, of children had been forcibly recruited to join the ranks of militant groups. We have seen videos of the Democratic Republic of the Congo military summarily executing civilians, many of whom are children. We have heard reports of Government personnel executing children as young as five years-old, as well as reports of widespread sexual violence committed by the forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is no doubt about who is perpetrating violence in the Kasai regions and what their motives are.

At the same time, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo there have been violent clashes, and around the country we have seen a surge in prison breaks. Those events, while not necessarily linked, reflect a lack of State authority or, as some have suggested, more deliberate efforts on the part of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to advance the strategy of chaos.

There is no time to delay. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure the rapid start and completion of voter registration in the Kasais. We also welcome the efforts of MONUSCO to help support voter registration in the Kasais, in line with its mandate.

For the United States, our bottom line is clear. The United States supports holding elections on time, per the terms of the 31 December agreement of 2016. There is a narrow window of opportunity for all of us to press the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to stay true to its commitments. All of us need to seize this chance now. We already know what mass violence and horror look like in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We cannot let history repeat itself.

**Mr. Biagini** (Italy): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his comprehensive briefing.

Italy is deeply worried by the worsening of the security and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular in the Kasai provinces. The spillover effect of the situation on the stability of the region should also not be underestimated. We are equally concerned by the shrinking of the democratic space in the country and human rights violations. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the primary responsibility to respect and protect the rights of all of its citizens. We encourage it to fulfil its obligations, including those to hold accountable the perpetrators of violence.

At the political level, Italy remains convinced that the full implementation of the 31 December agreement continues to be the only viable and agreed political road map, and is therefore key to sustaining the legitimacy of transitional institutions. That transition must lead the country towards democratic and transparent elections, to be help as soon as possible and in compliance with the constitution and the 31 December agreement. In that connection, the Independent National Electoral Commission's declarations today are not encouraging. We call on the Government and Congolese political forces to speed up the preparation of credible, peaceful and inclusive elections conducive to a democratic transfer of power.

In conclusion, let me renew Italy's full support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both play a vital role in the country.

**Mr. Bessho** (Japan): I wish to thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing. I welcome his visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo last month to urge key players to fulfil their commitment to the December agreement, especially his engagement with President Kabila. I thought that was very important.

Having heard his briefing, we remain deeply concerned about the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is regrettable that there has been little progress in the political process, including on the implementation of the December agreement. This has been the case since the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) mandate renewal and troop reduction in March. Security in the country has declined, and the situation is especially dire in Kasai. We support MONUSCO's efforts to adapt to the situation and its trying to be as flexible and agile as possible within its mandate, as Mr. Lacroix explained to us today.

Since the consultations we held three months ago, the situation of declining security is spreading, as evidenced by the serious violence in Kasai. The implementation of the political agreement has been slow at best, and the prospect of timely elections remains uncertain. In this regard, we are concerned by the announcement by the Independent National Electoral Commission that it will be unable to conduct the elections by the end of the year. The international community, including the Council, must remain united and committed in sending a clear message to the parties in the Congo, especially the Government, on the need to swiftly implement the agreement, including the holding of elections.

Supporting the political and electoral process is now one of MONUSCO's core mandates. Under-Secretary-General Lacroix has explained to us the main challenges that MONUSCO is currently facing, including the extreme difficulty of voter registration in Kasai given

the situation and the lack of resources in general. He gave us some idea of what else MONUSCO can and must do in supporting the Congolese authorities and these processes, including in particular the early holding of elections. We support the work of MONUSCO.

Regarding another priority task of MONUSCO, that is, the protection of civilians, the Mission has been adjusted to relocate a substantive number of personnel and resources to the western and southern areas so as to better respond to this challenge. The situation in Kasai is dire, with more than 3,300 killings reported by the Catholic church since last October. Civilians continue to be attacked by armed elements in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Does this mean that the reinforcement of up to several hundred personnel in Kasai that is envisioned is not sufficient to achieve results on the ground?

The Council should continue to monitor whether, in the light of the current security situation across the country, the current posture of the Mission is sufficient to ensure the effective and dynamic protection of civilians.

While the overall strategic review is under way, we support MONUSCO's efforts in acting actively and flexibly, adapting to the situation under such difficult circumstances.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July and to thank you for the opportunity afforded me to address the Council at this meeting, which is devoted to the situation concerning my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would like also to extend the gratitude of the Congolese Government and the Congolese people to all members of the Security Council for their commitment to my country's cause and their ongoing concern as they seek to ensure that peace and stability are fully restored throughout all of its territory.

My delegation took note of the content of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)(S/2017/435). I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, who has just briefed the Council thereon.

We have a few observations to make regarding the analysis of a number of issues addressed in the report, with a view to deepening the Council's understanding. In that regard, I would particularly focus on issues pertaining to the political situation, the security situation and human rights violations in the Kasai region. I will also briefly touch upon the Force transformation and the strategic dialogue.

As regards the political situation, and as noted in the report in paragraph 3, following a lack of flexibility and of concessions on the part of the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement, the appointment of the members of the Government has been delayed. This same attitude also prevailed during the signing of the specific arrangements on the implementation of the agreement and led to a delay in the establishment of the National Council for Oversight of the Agreement and the Electoral Process.

As regards the latter issue, it is important to stress that, as part of the forthcoming establishment of said council, a preparatory meeting was held on Monday, 3 July, that brought together the members of the council, including representatives of the Majorité présidentielle, the opposition groups that signed the agreement of 18 October, part of the Rassemblement — those affiliated with Félix Tshisekedi and their allies having refused to participate — and representatives of civil society. Another meeting involving those same individuals will be held shortly and will focus on the appointment by consensus of the chair of said body, the validation of members' mandates and their entry into office, and the drawing up of internal rules of procedure.

As regards the elections, as noted in the report, the process of updating the voter register appears to be well under way. Thirteen of the country's 26 provinces have been fully covered by the process. Efforts are ongoing in 11 others but have not yet begun in the provinces of Kasai and Kasai Central because of the insecurity prevailing there as a result of the activities of the Kamwina Nsapu militia. Indeed, in those provinces certain officers of the Independent National Electoral Commission were singled out; a number of offices were set ablaze and equipment was destroyed. Today a certain degree of calm has returned, and the Commission has committed to once again deploying equipment. According to

the schedule that it has established, operations could commence in both provinces as early as 20 July.

Hence it is critical that displaced persons who fled abroad and to other parts of the country owing to insecurity return to their homes to participate in the process. To that end, the Government invites the peoples of the two provinces to demonstrate greater civic-mindedness so as to enable the process to take place smoothly. It also calls upon political stakeholders of all stripes, civil society and members of the international community to avoid the use of any rhetoric likely to rekindle tensions so as to create an environment conducive to restoring calm and tranquillity, all of which are vital to the holding of elections.

To date, the Independent National Electoral Commission has already registered nearly 33 million of the 45 million expected voters throughout the country.

Going back to the concern that certain Council members expressed about the organization of elections, the Council will agree that we need all of the country's provinces to participate. The fact is that we cannot contemplate organizing a ballot as important as the presidential election without including Kasai and Kasai Central provinces, which represent more than 10 per cent of our entire voting population. It goes without saying that if an election were held without them it could undermine the credibility of the result, which in turn could lead to disorder and trouble.

On the security front, the Government is aware of the worrying situation in the eastern part of the country and in both Kasais. That is why it remains mobilized and focused on acting, with the army's help, to restore order, peace and security and to continue to work to eradicate national and foreign armed groups. In the case of the Kasai provinces generally, as the report acknowledges, our army is working to restore order and curb insecurity there. In that regard, I should mention that a large number — almost 1,700 — of militiamen have surrendered, with their weapons, and have received reintegration kits from the Government, while 138 children from their ranks have been handed over to UNICEF and MONUSCO for social integration.

In connection with the human rights violations reported in those provinces, the President of the Republic had already instructed the Minister of Justice to take the necessary steps to expedite investigations so that all the victims who have experienced atrocities in these regions can see justice done. In that context, the behaviour of the marginal elements of the army who have committed atrocities against civilians in Mwanza Lomba has been condemned by a military court, and it is therefore not true to say, as some Council members have done, that their violations have gone unpunished. The military court is continuing its investigations in order to punish all the guilty parties.

Similarly, we are proceeding with action on the murder of the two United Nations experts. The Government, which has been cooperating on the matter with MONUSCO and the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, is determined to conduct the case transparently and to punish the perpetrators of the crime. In that spirit, we welcomed the request of the United States Government, which is participating in the investigations through the Federal Bureau of Investigation. As I have told the Council previously, my Government is also ready and open to working with the Swedish Government if it would like us to. The ongoing investigations have enabled us to arrest 11 more suspects, of whom eight have been identified as having played a direct role in the killing of the experts.

With regard to some Council members' statements, my delegation was surprised by the virulent reactions to our forces of law and order. It is a fact that, as happens in every army all over the world, some marginal elements have committed abuses that we deplore and condemn. My Government has taken the necessary steps to ensure that they are punished. Consider the violence that occurred in the Kasais, where the Kamwina Nsapu militia attacked our security forces, killing and beheading some of them and exhibiting their heads like trophies. If that happened in Council members' countries, how would their forces of law and order react? When a country's armed forces sometimes react violently in the face of even minor events, that we all live through, how do Council members react? What steps do they take? I think we should avoid double standards on such issues. To bring closure to this topic, I would like to assure the Council that justice will be rendered for the United Nations experts as well as for their four Congolese companions, whose bodies have never been found. Ultimately, justice will finally be rendered to all of our compatriots who have fallen victim to the violence of the Kamwina Nsapu militia.

The report also mentions the mass graves that have been found in those parts of the country. In that regard, I should point out what happened just in some cases investigated by a joint mission carried out by MONUSCO

and the military prosecutor of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) in the commune of Nganza a Kananga, where MONUSCO claimed to have identified seven mass graves. When the first alleged mass grave was opened, they found one body. About 100 metres away, in a second alleged mass grave, the investigators found a 12-bore shotgun. In the third, they found two headless bodies. In Tshimbulu territory, an alleged mass grave had been dug near the place where the two United Nations experts' bodies were found. The joint MONUSCO/FARDC teams found a motorcycle in it. We are not saying that mass graves do not exist. It is up to those who say that they exist to show them to us and for investigators to establish their existence. Unfortunately, as the Council will have realized, in the cases I referred to, which MONUSCO announced with much fanfare, the report avoids saying anything that would contradict it.

The deplorable situation of displaced persons is not confined to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To date, as the report clearly highlights, the number of refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the beginning of June was 467,473, most of them from neighbouring countries mentioned in the report. Besides these refugees, there are also many foreign armed groups. The regional approach to the situation is therefore important and should continue.

As the report acknowledges with regard to the deployment of MONUSCO and its fulfilment of its mandate, the drawdown of 3,600 peacekeepers that is the subject of one of the provisions of resolution 2348 (2017) has not yet taken place. Nor has the operationalization of the Intervention Brigade. According to our information, that cannot happen until the current troops are replaced by far more seasoned troops with equipment that is better adapted to dealing with asymmetric conflict.

I should not conclude without thanking the United Nations for its commitment and dedication to my country's cause, as well as reiterating our gratitude to all the members of the Security Council.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.*